

# **DEGREE THESIS**

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**IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION-  
EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF  
FOREIGN STUDENTS AT ARCADA  
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIES SCIENCES**

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<b>DEGREE THESIS</b>	
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<p><b>Abstract:</b></p> <p>Arcada is an international university of applied sciences with 2500 students. Arcada offers modern education in Swedish and English within Business Administration, Tourism, Media and Technology, Sports and Health Care and Social Services. There is a significant population of foreign students at Arcada. They represent 50 different nationalities, which is about 10 per cent of Arcada's total number of students.</p> <p>This study analyzes different approaches in creating more interaction and activities between foreign and Finnish students. The theoretical part of the thesis describes factors influencing immigration and integration in general. It also describes the present situation regarding immigration to Finland. The desk research material for the thesis is collected from official reports, internet, and newspapers.</p> <p>The empirical part analyses immigration and integration in practice. In particular, it analyses the expectations and experience of foreign students at Arcada. The empirical study is a survey based upon a questionnaire distributed to the foreign students of Arcada.</p> <p>Based on the findings, European and American students seem to have fewer problems in coping with the Finnish culture compared to other nationalities. The cultural gap seems to be more obvious and bigger among Asian and African students, resulting in less interaction with society than is the case for Europeans and Americans.</p>	

The study ends with some recommendations on how to assist foreign students at Arcada to interact with the Finnish culture.

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## 1

**INTRODUCTION**

The immigration in Finland goes back to 16<sup>th</sup> century when the first Romanies were deported from the neighbor country of Sweden to Finland, which at the time was part of Swedish realm called Hinterland. When Finland was granted with its independency in 1917 the amount of immigrants started to increase rapidly. This increase was due to Russian Revolution which brought up to 41,000 refugees to Finland between years 1917-1922. (Tanner Arno, 2004)

Within the last few years the number of immigrant moving to Finland from other EU countries has been higher than Finnish immigrating into other EU countries. Since 1997 the immigration from EU countries into Finland has been increasing, however immigration from Finland into other EU countries has not been changed much. (Tanner Arno, 2004)

Finland has a small foreign community compared to other European countries. The Population of foreign citizens is approximately 2.7 % of the population. The Total amount of foreigners in Finland was estimated to be 143 256 by the end of 2008. The largest group of foreigners is formed by the following nationalities as shown in the table below by the end of 2008. (Statistics Finland, 2009)

Table 1. Foreigners in Finland

Countries of citizenship	Total amount	%
Russia	26 909	19
Estonia	22 604	16
Sweden	8 439	6
Somalia	4 919	3
China	4 620	3
Thailand	3 932	3
Germany	3 502	2
Turkey	3 429	2
Iraq	3 238	2

Throughout the research the author has been searching for information regarding the process of applying for Finnish residence permit as a foreign student. In 2008 there were 3 497 residence permit applications received of which 111 were rejected. (Finnish Immigration Service, 2009)

The objectives of the research are to investigate the immigration and expectations of integration, as well as the experience of foreign students at Arcada University of Applied Sciences and the relationship of this to the possible career path is also investigated.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND**

Arcada is an international university of applied sciences with 2500 student. It represents 50 different nationalities, which is about 10 per cent of its total amount of students.

Arcada offers modern education in Swedish and English within Business Administration, Tourism, Media and Technology, Sports and Health Care and Social Services.

The purpose of this research is to analyze different approaches in creating more interaction and activities between foreign and Finnish students. There are significant numbers of foreign student studying at Arcada. The study material for this thesis is collected from official reports, internet, and newspapers. The objectives of this research are geographically limited to Helsinki. The results of the questionnaire are based on the answers of the foreign students of the Arcada University of Applied Sciences.

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES**

The theoretical part of the study aims at describing factors influencing immigration and integration in general. It also describes the present situation regarding immigration to Finland.

The empirical part analyses immigration and integration in practice. In particular, it analyses the expectations and experience of foreign students at Arcada. The main objectives are:



- To define the process of applying for study visa to Finland and the approval rates based on different geographical locations.
- To define the main reason for foreign students at Arcada to choose Finland as a host country.
- To define how motivated are the foreign students at Arcada to settle down in Finland after their graduation.
- To define different ways of assisting foreign students at Arcada to adapt to the Finnish culture.
- To define how changes in free education law would affect foreign students at Arcada.
- To define the importance of Finnish language while applying for a job in Finland.

## 1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

Studying abroad for the students can be compared to immigration, where you need to adapt to a complete different life style. Weather, language, culture and many other things need to be considered. It is not much of a problem in Finland today, where the peaceful, easy going, well organized, and English speaking population makes it simple and faster for any foreigner to feel at home.

Adding to the cultural fact, Finland is one of world's most competitive economies that can afford to provide locals and foreigners free education and ease on their financial pressures as soon as they are accepted in the universities. Besides this, teachers are willing to take an extra step and listen to the student's needs and problems in a personal way that can help them solve some of their issues. This specifically applies to those who can not manage on their own.

(CIMO, 2006)

The methods used for this research have been a combination of theoretical and empirical. The researcher has searched for any related literatures to this topic. The researcher has used literature in the beginning of the research to analyze the topic and in further stages the researcher has used empirical method. The empirical method is based on quantitative approach, which primarily aims at gathering information by using survey in order to compare and evaluate different groups as the units of the analysis.

The theoretical part has been taken into the consideration while forming the objectives and scope of the research as well as forming the questionnaire.

## **2 IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION**

### **2.1 IMMIGRATION**

The history of immigration begins with the very basic needs of humans which led them to exist and establish a civilization. The existence of immigration often depends on the need of people for basic needs such as food, shelter and work.

Immigrants are people who leave their country of origin behind in the hope of finding a better future elsewhere.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration#General\\_theories\\_behind\\_immigration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration#General_theories_behind_immigration))

According to The International Organization for Migration, there are more than 200 million migrants around the world today. Europe has received the largest number of immigrants, with 70.6 million people in 2005. North America has received over 45.1 million immigrants followed by Asia with nearly 25.3 million. The international Integration and Refugee Association estimated about 175 million international migrants in 2005 which is under 3 percent of the global population. (The International Organization for Migration, 2008)

The Middle East, small areas of South East Asia, some areas in the West Indies and few parts of Europe have the highest percentage of immigration population recorded by UN Census in 2005, however due to the concealed character of undocumented labor migration the reliability of immigrants censuses is quite low. (UN Census, 2005)

Based on researches done by some immigrant countries, there are some barriers experienced by immigrant groups and some minority ethnic groups to integrate in the labor market that can be considered as push and pull factors behind immigration. Push factors can be defined as the reasons that lead people to leave their country of origin for a better future and again pull factors are reasons

that attract people to move to the specific country, with better life standards. These barriers can be listed as follows:

- Migration history
  - Legal status in the host country which would restrict refugee seekers from seeking for training or any opportunities for employment.
  - Any personal difficulties experienced in previous country such as Trauma/violence which would slow down the integration process.
- Skills and competencies
  - Language skills (limits the communication between immigrants and outside world)
  - Lack of education in country of destination restricts immigrant of finding a job.
  - No previous work experience in country of destination
  - Lack of qualification and recognition in country of destination.
- Cultural background
  - Cultural background such as beliefs, culture, customs and traditions. Cultural background has a major influence on immigrant's integration into the society.
  - Attitudes, motivations and aspirations of immigrants to be involved in the society and seeking for a job.
- Personal obligation
  - Dependence of a person on a government especially for financial support.

- Family structure and norms (family size and behavioral expectations within a society or groups)
- Employer attitudes, discrimination and knowledge
  - Stereotypical characteristics such as false prejudice which would held back immigrant from blending into the society.
  - Lack of knowledge about the country of immigration(values, culture, required qualification and experience)

(Organization for economic co-operation and development, 2006 p.37)

These are only some examples of cultural and social barriers that need to overcome in order to achieve interaction among immigrants and other minority ethnic groups and to ensure that immigrants can contribute into their host country in the same way as other residents.

## 2.2 INTEGRATION

Background, culture, social and political status of each country represent the living condition of its citizens which can be used for analyzing certain issues related to the main cause of immigration.

The integration between cultures is very important since it maintains unity and balance in a particular society. It also helps to keep a society together, so that all the citizens can share the same values and beliefs in a social system, which helps to reduce conflict in a society. When different parts of society are linked together, it becomes more homogeneous, which would affect the amount of conflict present.

There are several different aspects and factors affecting immigrants and their integration to new societies and countries they decided to move to. This can require lots of studying and research to find out the main goals of both the hosting countries and the new immigrants. All countries have their ways of approaching the matter of integration in their society, which can be used as an example for this study. Some countries apply several different methods, researches, policies and

budgets to improve their skills in order to ensure immigrants contribution to new society in the same way as the rest of the residents.

There have been major changes in the immigration system around the world, especially in countries like the United State of America, Canada and some European countries. Each of these countries had confronted serious difficulties in regard of foreign integration in their society. They however had their own experience of solving it. Sweden is a good example of the European countries, which has not been very successful in term of integrating immigrants “into its society”, which has lead to the high unemployment rate among foreign citizens in that country.

Welfare dependency is one of the factors which affect the entry of immigrants from non-industrialized countries into the labor market. Generous welfare benefits, high taxes, labor market regulations and strong labor unions trap people in the welfare dependency. This matter has been an issue even among highly educated and motivated group of immigrants. This is a reason why some countries has invested time, money and efforts to find out new ways of creating new programs to help immigrants to adopt to the new life style and learn how to speak and write a new language. Language skill has a great influence on new immigrant’s mental adaptation. Normally what happens with the immigrants is that they enter a new environment leaving every thing they are familiar with such as language, family, culture and work with no guarantees of finding a job or place to live. Facing a different culture, language, new laws, racism and other behavior inhibits their integration.

There are many different actions that need to be implanted by the hosting countries in order to improve the integrations of immigrants, for example projects such as the guidance of the immigration and integration, free language classes, necessary information needed to cope with the society and work life.(Bishdawg, 2006; Ministry of interior, 2008)

The integration is a wide subject that gets influenced by many factors, which need to be constantly studied and examined. In this research the author has tried to cover as many factors influencing the integration process as possible.

### 3

## IMMIGRATION TO FINLAND

### 3.1 SHORTAGE OF LABOR FORCE

Finland is one of the world's fastest ageing populations, which will create some serious problem in the future. Many people are getting retired and the length of life expectancy is increasing more among the population in the coming future. The number of people who enter the working age is much less compared to the ones who exit, and this issue might lead Finland to suffer from shortage of labor in the future. The actual reason for this problem is that the fertility rate is staying below the birth rate for a generation. In fact the only solution for such a matter is to attract foreign labor from other countries otherwise the effect will become more visible and the Finnish economy will pay high prices for it.

There are several problems that the country would get engaged on in case of labor force shortage, the production will decline and also there won't be enough tax payers to cover the costs of the ageing society. As the number of elderly people increases, there is a higher need of health care services.

The future of Finland depends on the development of immigration and it can also be a great asset in the future of the country. There are not so many options for resolving the shortage of labor except for bringing it from abroad. This can make up the loss in man power before the country goes through any further inescapable consequences. For sure there will be many obstacles and challenges for the government to deal with when it comes to immigration, for it will deal not only with economics but also has a lot to do with people, societies, etc.(Statistics Finland, 2007)

### 3.2 THE INCREASE OF FOREIGN NATIONALITIES IN FINLAND

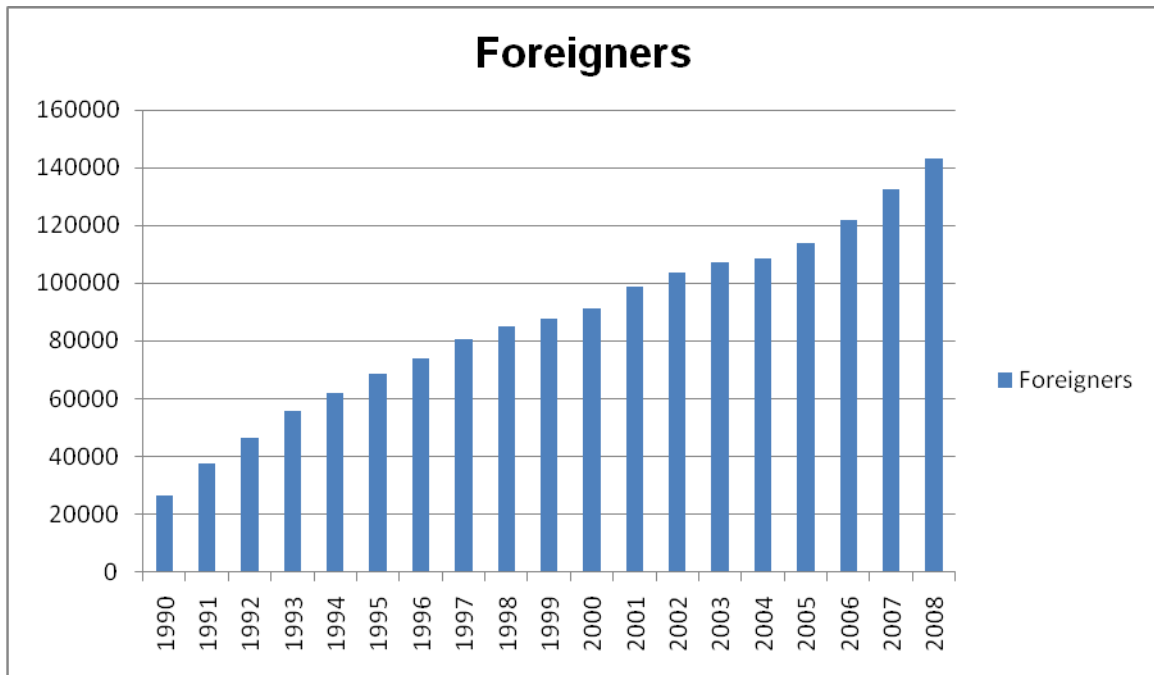


Figure 1. Number of immigrants in Finland between years 1990 and 2008

Sources: Finnish Immigration Service, 2009

The histogram above shows the growth of foreign nationalities in Finland between years 1990 and 2008. As it can be noticed the number of foreigners has been growing dramatically and has exceeded 140 000 persons in 2008.

The inhabitant statistics shows that the new wave of Asian immigrants has started in 2005 toward metropolitan area. The portion of immigration from Asia has risen by a quarter, when it was previously smaller. These immigrations come mainly from large countries such as China and India and there are over 100 immigrants from Thailand.

The bulk of immigrants come from Europe, most of which are from Estonia.

The amount of immigrants from African countries has clearly decreased since 90's.

Somalis form a third largest group of immigrants in the metropolitan area, more than Estonians and Russians and nationalities from former SOU union. (Moisio Teppo, 2009)

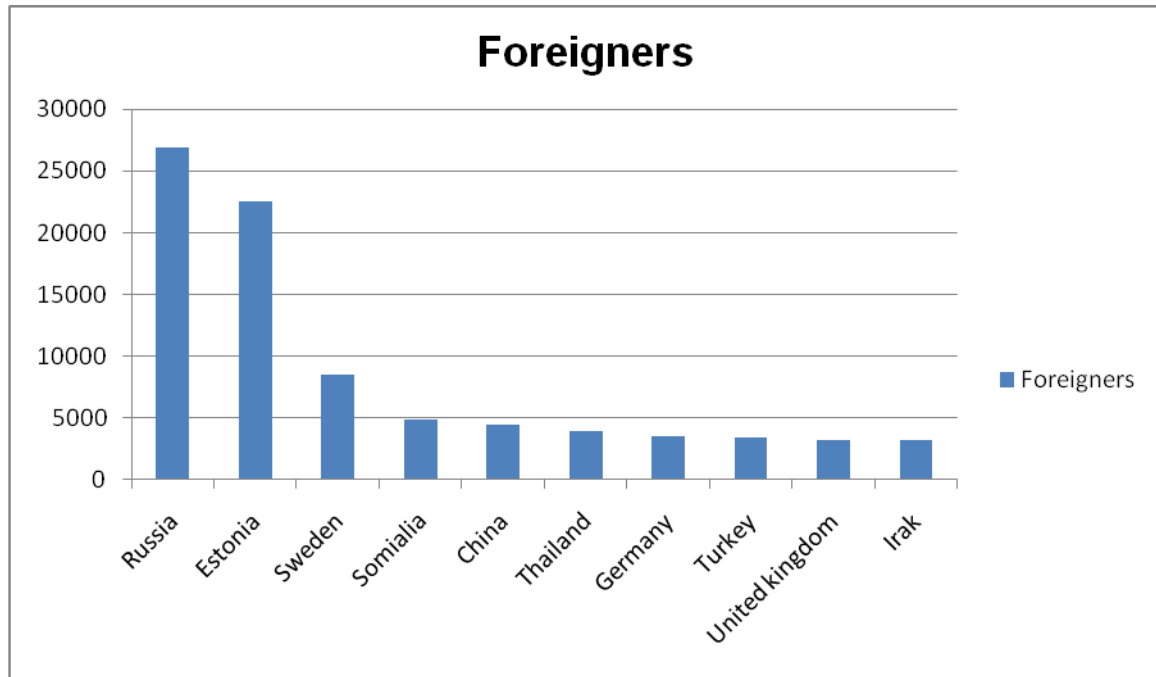


Figure2. The largest groups of countries of origin in Finland by the end of 2008  
Sources: Finnish Immigration Service, 2009

As it can be seen from the histogram above, Russia and Estonia form the two major groups in Finland followed by Sweden.

### 3.3 INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN HELSINKI METROPOLITAN AREA

**“Helsinki region today is kind of a laboratory for the multicultural Finland Tomorrow”**

(Perhoniemi Riku; Jasinskaja-Lahti Inga, 2006)

In 1997 the department of social psychology in the University of Helsinki conducted a study regarding the adaptation of immigrants in the Finnish society. The Study compared the experience reported by different ethnic groups such as Russians, Estonians, Finns from abroad, Somalis, Arabs, Vietnamese and Turks.

The purpose of the research was to find out the level of adaptation among the immigrants who have moved to Finland in early 1990s. The research sample was taken from 457 immigrants that have lived in Helsinki Metropolitan Area in 1997.

Based on the research the language skill has a huge influence on the integration between Finns and immigrants. Those immigrants who have improved their language skills have had a better



possibility to adopt the Finnish culture faster and even have found jobs. According to the study, most of the immigrants were willing to integrate with the Finnish society and they managed to blend in without giving up their own family values and ethnical identities.

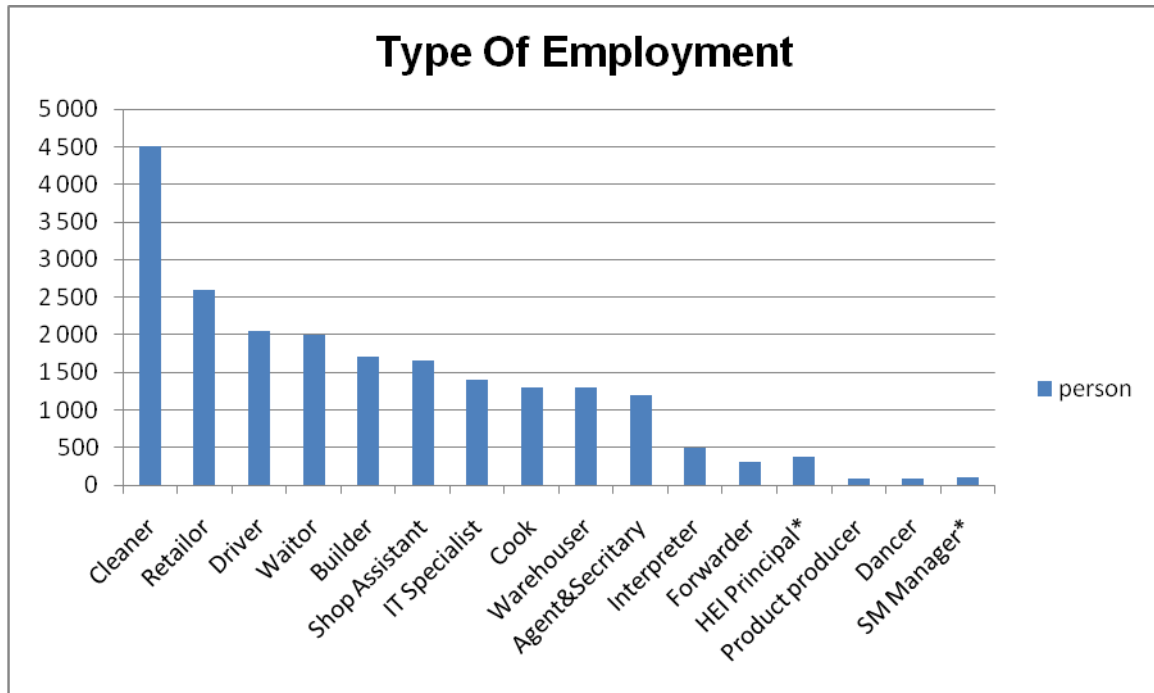
There are different factors affecting the integration of immigrants in the Finnish society. Mental adaptation is one of the most important factors that people happen to ignore. The feeling of being part of the society helps adapting to the culture and finding a job, however the feeling of social exclusion works the other way around. It mainly depends on individuals to make enough effort to adapt to their new society. Different ethnic groups face different problems, For instance; Somalis and Arabs meet social exclusion, and lack of motivation among them to learn Finnish language, Vietnamese experience bad self-confidence, mental stress among Russians.

As the number of immigrants is growing, the attitude among Finns seems to get more favorable. (Perhoniemi Riku; Jasinskaja-Lahti Inga, 2006)

### **3.4 IMMIGRANTS IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

Getting a job in Finland can be a difficult task for foreigners, for instance Finnish languages is required by almost all the employers in Finland, which makes it difficult for those whom they do not speak it.

As shown in figure 3 the most common job performed by foreigners is cleaning, as it does not require much of a language skill like other jobs. In 2006 the two most common jobs among foreigners were cleaners (performed by over 4500 people) and sells personnel within retailers. (performed by 2000 people.).



\*Higher educational institutions principal

\*Small business manager

Figure 3. The most common jobs among foreigners in 2006  
Sources: Statistics Finland, 2008

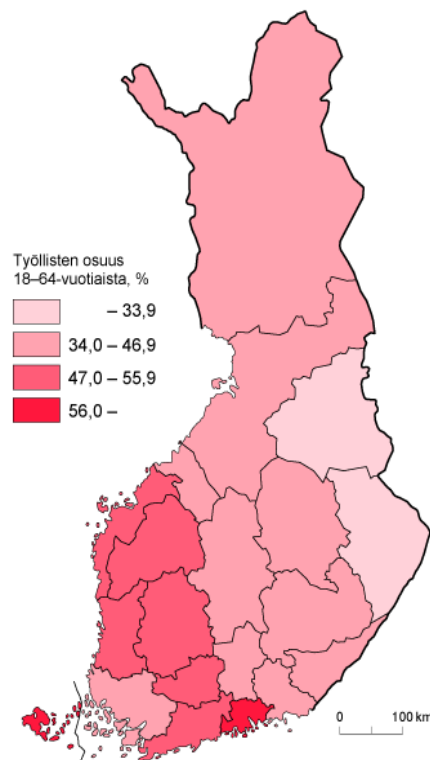
### 3.4.1 The employment of immigrants in Finland

There have not been many studies regarding immigration in Finland however in 2005 there was a study presented at a press conference in Helsinki made by employment, Income tax and income transfer of immigrants in 1990's. It was stated that the longer time immigrants live in Finland, the more likely it is for them to find jobs and in fact successful integration between Finnish and immigrants would make the foreign employment much faster. According to the Minister of Labour, Tarja Filatov, "the study supports the concept that immigration in the long run clearly benefits the Finnish society" (Filatov Tarja, 2005)

### 3.4.2 The employment rate among immigrants in Finland

The statistics shows that the employment rate among 18-64 year old immigrants, who live permanently in Finland, has increased from 42, 3% to 48, 9% which is 6, 6% between 2000 and 2006.

In 2006 there were 45 000 foreigners employed, which was higher in comparison with year 2000 by 18 000. As it can be noticed from the map below the highest employment rate was in the East part and metropolitan area by 56, 0%. The least employment rate has been in the West corner of Finland by 33, 9%.(Statistics Finland, 2008)



*Proportion of employed rate in Finland between ages 18-64.*

Source: Statistics Finland, 2006.

## 4

## STUDENT IMMIGRATION

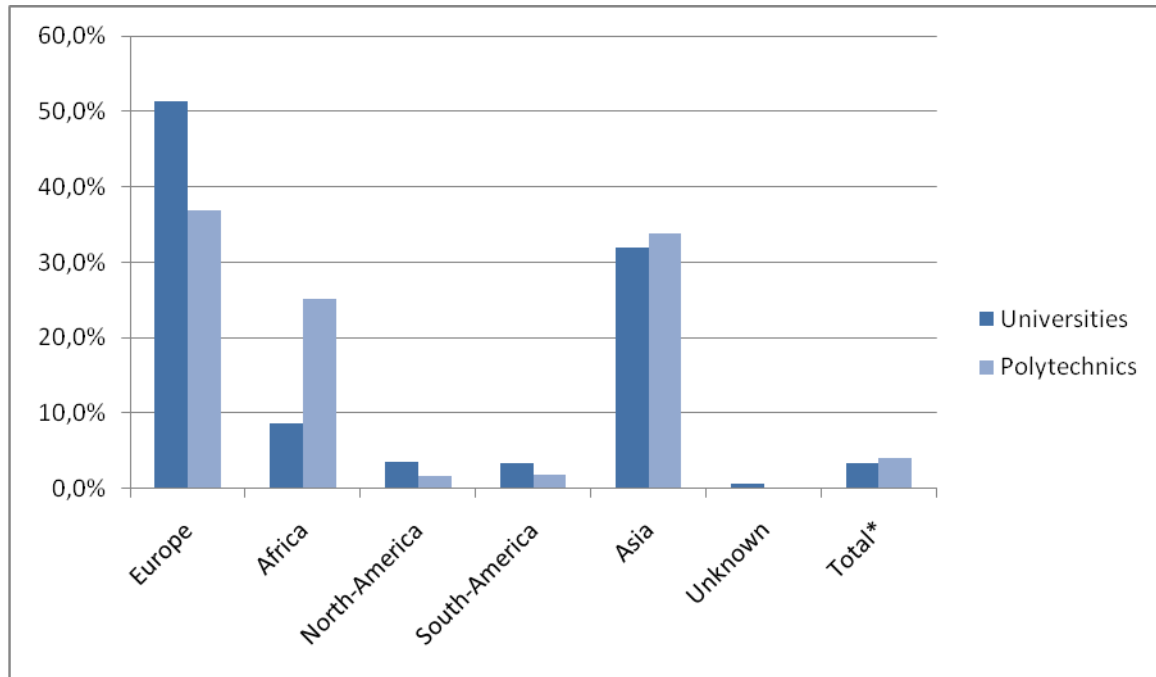
### 4.1 FINLAND AS A POTENTIAL COUNTRY

Based on different references and discussions regarding the educational status of Finland, students can decide whether it is the appropriate environment needed for them to get their degree from or not.

To start with, the high educational standard for higher degrees is all what master's and doctorate's students wish for and especially when language is not a problem as English is well spoken among the Finns and taught in 350 international study programs. (Cimo, 2006)

of course there are other factors affecting student decisions such as what programs the universities offer, long or short , bachelor's only or master's and doctorate's too? Knowing that Finnish universities offer huge varieties between high-tech programs to fine arts as well as the European credit transfer system which can be a big relief for a lot of the students seek to change or transfer without wasting time or money by taking this step.

Many Finnish universities provide great opportunities for practical training relating to what the students study. This can happen inside or outside the university building such as in Finnish companies and international ones.



Total\*=Share of total foreign students in comparison with all the students in polytechnics and universities in Finland.

Figure 4. The origin of foreign students studying at universities and polytechnics (2007)

Source: Statistics Finland, 2007

Students coming from EU-countries to study in Finland were estimated to be a total of 3364 consisting of 1 138 students in polytechnics and 2 226 students in universities. These groups are the largest foreign student in Finland.

Swedish students were 532 in 2007 which 245 of these students were studying in polytechnics and 287 in universities. There were 699 Russians studying in polytechnics and 592 in universities which was a total of 1 291 students. The Numbers of Estonians were 310 in polytechnics and 371 in universities and a total of 681 students.

As it can be concluded from the figure 4 the second largest group are Asian and the majority of them are from China; consisting a total of 1859 students which 1 034 are studying in polytechnics and 825 students in universities.

African students are the third largest group in Finland. There are 1356 students studying in polytechnics and 505 in universities which are a total of 1861 students. (Statistics Finland, 2007)

## 4.2 RESIDENCY PERMIT

Foreign students are required to apply for residency permit if their studies last more than 3 months in Finland. Students from the EU countries are not accountable for this regulation. The first residency permits for students costs 100 € which increases to 200 € in case of any extensions.

Residency permit to a student lasts for a year. However it can be extended if studies take more than a year. The residence permit can be extended as long as the student is registered at the educational institution and has performed well in studies.

Foreign students do not receive any funding from the Finnish government during their stay in Finland and in a matter of fact each applicant must be able to provide proof of income to the Finnish government which would state that the student can sustain their expenses during the academic year. Each foreign student must be able to provide a security statement of a minimum of 500 Euros/a month or a total of 6000euros/year. (Finnish Immigration Service, 2009)

Students are permitted to apply for full time or part time employment while staying in Finland as long as the working time is not more than 25 hours per week. When a student has completed studies he can remain in Finland and apply for a new residency permit as long as he has a new study place or a job. (Finnish Immigration Service, 2009)

## 4.3 THE STUDENTS RESIDENCY APPLICATION

The student residency application time is concentrated to the summer months, however the applications of exchange students during the fall and "year change" also adds to this number. The initiated amount of residency applications for the last year up until august, showed a 18% increase to year 2007. Figure 5 indicates 10 major nationalities found in residency applications during a year.

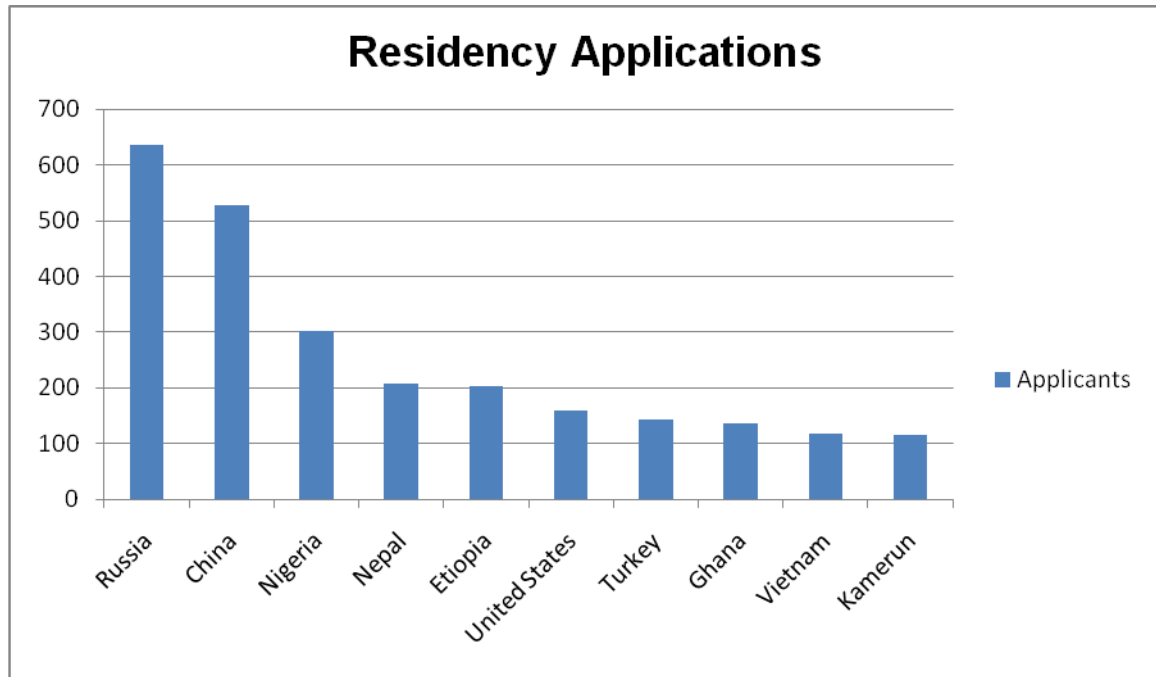


Figure 5. The country of origin of Student's residency applications

According to the data available in the immigration office, in 2007 between January and May there were 3 139 residency applications received by authorities and in 2008 this number had increased to 3 699.

The procedure time between applications varies however the result of each residency application should not exceed 27 days. (Finnish Immigration Service, 2009)

## 5

## EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

### 5.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Objectives of the empirical part of the research are to investigate the current situation of foreign students in Finland and relate that in the context of foreigners graduating from Finnish Universities and Polytechnics as a career path for them. The research's scope is limited geographically to Helsinki. The results of the questionnaire are based on the answers of the foreign students of the Arcada University of Applied Sciences. The main questions are:

- To define the process of applying visa to Finland and the approval rates based on different geographical locations.
- To define the main reason for foreign students at Arcada to choose Finland as a host country.
- To define how motivated are the foreign students at Arcada to be settled down in Finland after their graduation.
- To define different ways of assisting foreign students at Arcada to adopt the Finnish culture.
- To define how changes in free education law would affect foreign students at Arcada.
- To define the importance of Finnish language while applying for a job in Finland.

#### **Tools used in the survey**

The survey tool used for this research was quantitative measurements (questionnaires etc).

The author designed a questionnaire that was directed to the foreign students studying at Arcada University of Applied Sciences.



## 5.2 COLLECTION OF INFORMATION

The data collection took place between 2 April, 2009 and 15 June. The questionnaires were directly handed over to the foreign students studying at Arcada University of Applied Sciences. The researcher of this thesis work distributed 72 copies to the students however only 60 of them were filled in.

As it can be seen from the chart number 1, there were a total of 100 foreign students present for autumn 2009-2010 out of which the researcher managed to contact 72 of them.

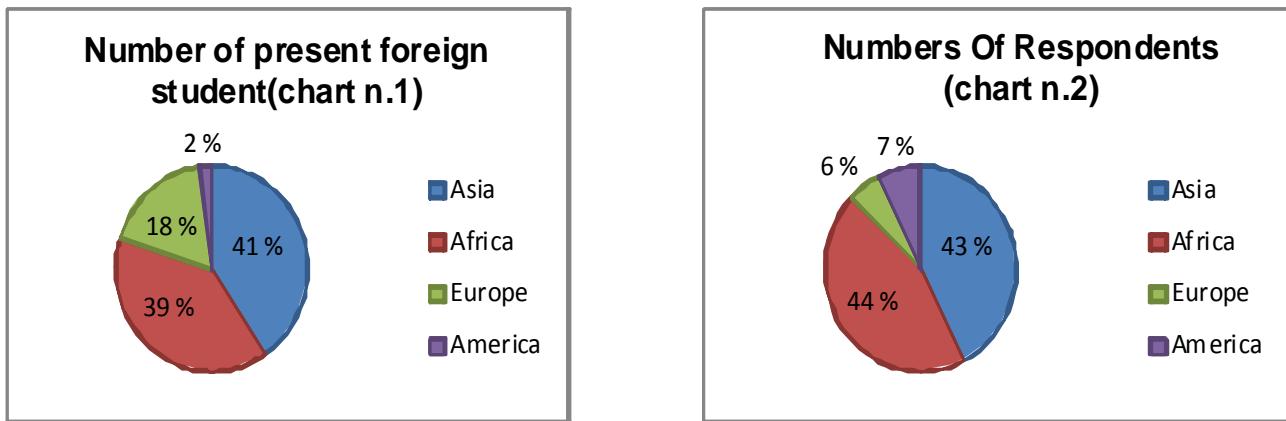


Figure 6.The geographical distribution of foreign students at Arcada.

## 6

## DATA ANALYSIS

### 5.1

Question 1 from the questionnaire: The country of Origin

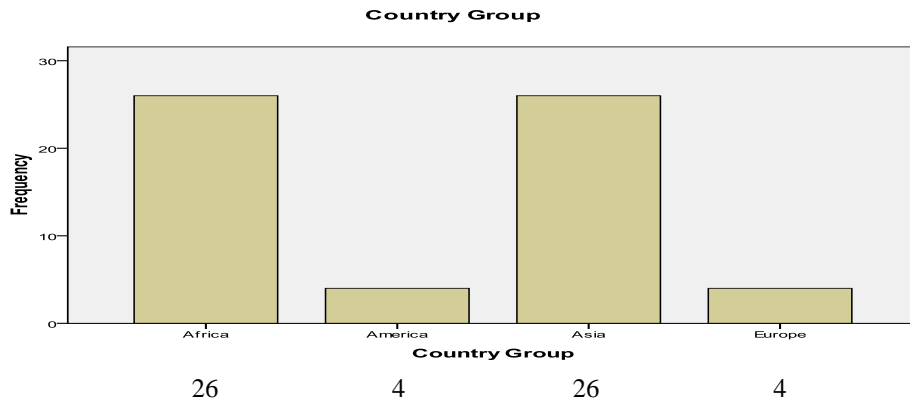


Figure 7. The geographical continent of foreign students at Arcada

60 respondents in this questionnaire had 22 different countries of origin, which shows how diverse the students are at Arcada University of Applied Sciences. 26 of respondents were from Asia, 26 from Africa, 4 from America and 4 from Europe.

Question 2 from the questionnaire: How Old are you?

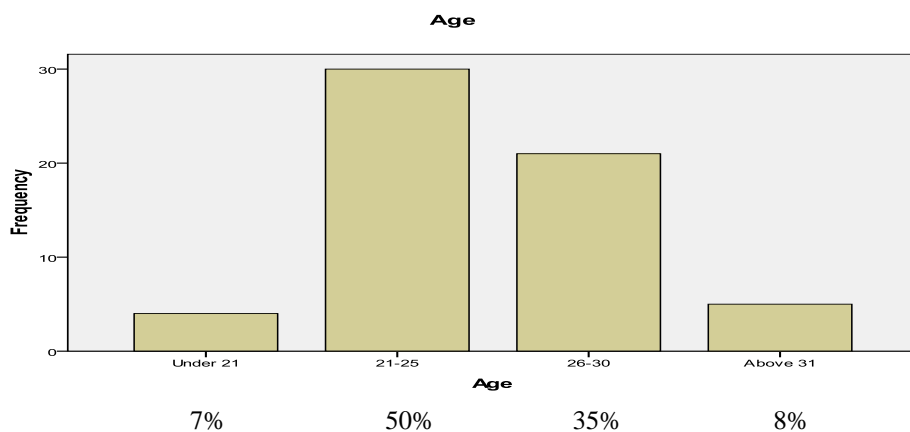


Figure 8. The age variety between foreign students at Arcada

7% of respondents were under 21 years of age. Only 8% of respondents were above 30 years of age. 50% of respondents were between 21-25 and 35% were between 26-30 years of age.

Question 3 from the questionnaire: How long have you lived in Finland?

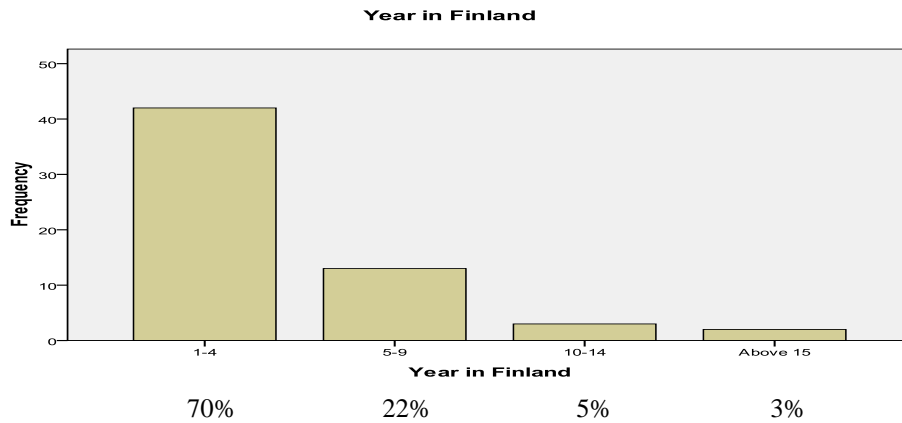


Figure 9. The residency period of foreign students in Finland

60 students responded to this question from which 70% lived between 1-4 years in Finland, 22% between 5-9 years, 5% between 10-14 and 3% above 15 years.

Question 4 from the questionnaire: How Long have you been studying in Arcada?

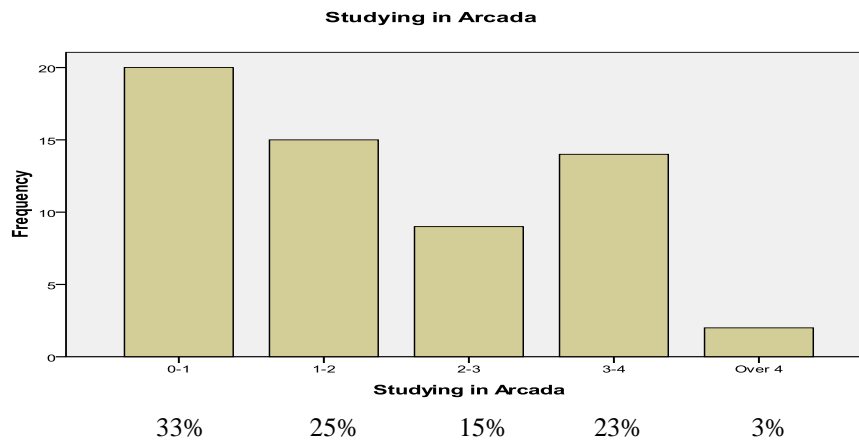


Figure 10. The study period of foreign students at Arcada

The total of 60 students responded to this question from which, 33% have studied less than a year in Finland, 25% between 1-2 years, 15% between 2-3, 23% between 3-4 and 3% over 4 years.

Question 5 from the questionnaire: Did you need a study visa for Finland? **(If yes describe if it was easy for you to obtain it)**

Table 2. Visa right among different nationalities at Arcada

		Count			
		Study Visa			Total
		No Answer	Yes	No	
Country Group	Africa	0	19	7	26
	America	0	2	2	4
	Asia	1	20	4	26
	Europe	0	0	4	4
Total		2	41	17	60

58 students responded to this question from which 71% needed a visa for Finland and 29% did not. All the Asian or African students are required to apply for a visa in order to be able to work or study in Finland however as it can be noticed from the table above some of the Asian or African students did not apply for a visa and this is due to their family status in Finland. For instance some of the students entered Finland as immigrants with their families.

The total of 31 students responded to the second part of this question from which 77% students found the process easy, 16% found it difficult and 7% founded average. All the students were required to provide the Finnish embassy in their country of origin with similar type of documents.

Question 6 from the questionnaire: Why did you choose Finland?

Different themes have emerged from the respondents regarding the choice of Finland as a host country. The Total of 56 students answered this question. Respondents assumed the following:

**Responses**

- Free education system
- Family ties
- Good education standards
- Beautiful nature
- Advanced technology

**Occurrence**

25  
12  
11  
4  
3

- Safety 2
- Good reputation 6
- Desirable study programs 3
- Good living conditions 2
- The geographical location of Finland 2
- Use of English language in some universities and colleges 3

Question 7a from the questionnaire: Do you speak Finnish?

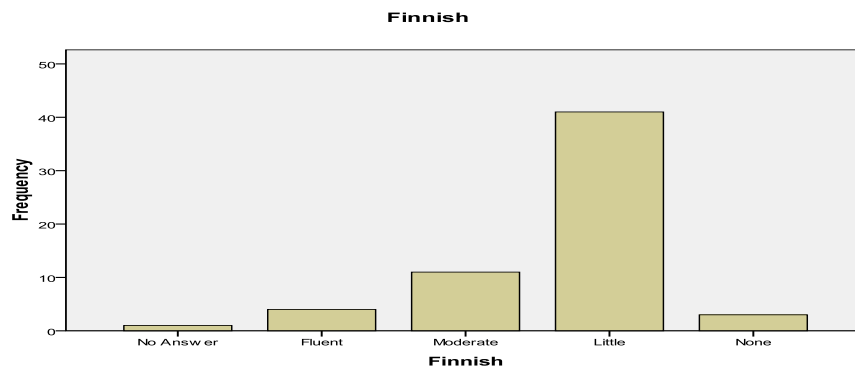


Figure 11. Finnish language skills among foreign students at Arcada

The total of 59 students responded to this question from which only 26% had acceptable knowledge of Finnish. 74% of the respondents had either little or no knowledge of Finnish.

Question 7b from the questionnaire: Q7b.Do you speak Swedish?

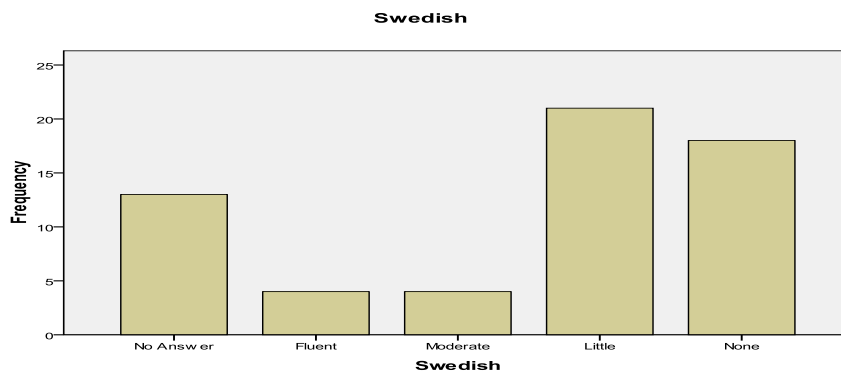


Figure 12. Swedish language skills among foreign students at Arcada

47 of students responded to this question from which, 17% had acceptable knowledge of Swedish. 83% of the respondents had either little or no knowledge of Swedish. The knowledge of Finnish seems to be slightly higher than Swedish among students.

Question 8 from the questionnaire: How do you find the Finnish culture?

Table 3. Finnish culture among foreign students at Arcada

Count		Finnish Culture			Total
		Easy	Fine	Complicated	
Country Group	Africa	2	8	16	26
	America	1	3	0	4
	Asia	5	12	9	26
	Europe	1	1	2	4
Total		9	24	27	60

The total of 60 students responded to this question from which 15% find the Finnish culture easy, 4% fine and 45% complicated. As it can be seen from the table above, the majority of African students find the Finnish culture complicated and this is while Asian students seem to have fewer problems with the Finnish culture.

Question 9 from the questionnaire: What were your expectations of Finland before arrival?

The total of 54 students responded to this question. Respondents assumed the following:

**Responses**

**Occurrence**

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| • Safe environment              | 3 |
| • Quite country                 | 2 |
| • Freedom                       | 1 |
| • Good quality of life          | 8 |
| • Similar to other EU countries | 4 |
| • Welcoming society             | 5 |
| • Nice and friendly environment | 6 |

- Good education system 5
- Open minded society 6
- Cold weather 6
- High discrimination level 1
- Helpful society 2
- More job opportunities 2
- Lots of lakes 1
- Less people 3
- Strict rules 1
- High technology 5
- Small country 1

Question 10 from the questionnaire: were your expectation met regarding Finland?

Table4. The expectation level among foreign nationalities at Arcada

Count

		Expectation			Total
		No Answer	Yes	No	
Country Group	Africa	0	9	17	26
	America	0	4	0	4
	Asia	1	17	8	26
	Europe	0	3	1	4
Total		1	33	26	60

The total of 59 students responded to this question from which 56% responded YES to this question and 44% NO. The majority of African students had the opinion that Finland did not correspond with their expectations. The majority of Asian, who responded, seemed satisfied.

Most of American and European student met their expectation regarding Finland.

Question 11 from the questionnaire: Have you ever been discriminated or become a victim of racism in Finland?

Table 5. The discrimination level faced by foreign students at Arcada.

Count

		Victim of racism			Total
		No Answer	Yes	No	
Country Group	Africa	1	19	6	26
	America	0	2	2	4
	Asia	0	11	15	26
	Europe	1	1	2	4
Total		2	33	25	60

58 students responded to this question from which, 57% responded YES to this question and 43% NO. The majority of African students have been discriminated or a victim of racism. This is while the discrimination level toward Asian, American and European students seem to be much less.

Question 12 from the questionnaire: Do you currently have a job?

Table 6. The employment rate among foreign students at Arcada.

Count

		Current Job		Total
		Yes	No	
Country Group	Africa	23	3	26
	America	4	0	4
	Asia	16	10	26
	Europe	2	2	4
Total		45	15	60



60 students responded to this question from which 75% of students are currently employed and 25% unemployed. The majority of African respondents are currently employed. Only 61% of Asian respondents are currently working. All American respondents are employed and this while only 5% of European respondents have jobs.

Question 13 from the questionnaire: Is your current job related to your field of study?

Table 7. The relativity between study and job field.

Count		Job related to Field of Study			Total
		No Answer	Yes	No	
Country Group	Africa	0	4	19	23
	America	0	2	2	4
	Asia	1	3	13	17
	Europe	0	1	1	2
Total		1	10	35	46

The total of 45 students responded to this question from which 22% of respondents are employed in their field of studies and 78% of respondents are doing jobs that is not related to their field. This is especially true among African and Asian students.

Question 14 from the questionnaire: Have you ever had a job/practical Training in Finland?

Table 8. Experience in work place.

Count		Job or practical training		Total
		Yes	No	
Country Group	Africa	1	2	3
	Asia	4	5	9
	Europe	2	0	2
Total		7	7	14

14 students responded to this question from 50% responded YES and 50% NO

Question 15 from the questionnaire: How Important do you think is the Finnish language while applying for a job in Finland?

Table 9. The importance of Finnish language at work place.

Count

		Importance of Finnish			Total
		Very Important	Less Important	Not Important	
Country Group	Africa	22	3	1	26
	America	4	0	0	4
	Asia	25	1	0	26
	Europe	4	0	0	4
Total		55	4	1	60

60 students responded to this question from which 91% find Finnish is very important while applying for a job, 7% less important, 2% not important.

Question 16 from the questionnaire: Would you stay in Finland after your graduation?(Explain)

Table 10. Career plans after graduation.

Count

		After graduation			Total
		Yes	No	Maybe	
Country Group	Africa	6	2	18	26
	America	3	0	1	4
	Asia	2	7	17	26
	Europe	2	1	1	4
Total		13	10	37	60

The total of 60 students responded to this question from which 22% would still be willing to stay in Finland after their graduation, 16% would leave and 62% were not sure.

39 students responded to the second part of this question. Some of the respondents thought of going back to their country of origin after the graduation due to their family connections or family

businesses. However the majority of respondents related their future plans to finding jobs within their fields of study. Mainly the respondents assumed that their future plan depends on the following:

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Occurrence</u>
• Finding a job related to their field of study	12
• Well paid salary	2
• Finding a university or a college for further studies	5

Question 17 from the questionnaire: In case of any changes in the free education law; would you still continue your studies in Finland?

Table 11. Effect of changes in the free education law.

Count					
	Free education law				Total
	No Answer	Yes	No	Maybe	
Country Group Africa	0	6	11	9	26
America	0	1	0	3	4
Asia	2	7	10	7	26
Europe	0	2	0	2	4
Total	2	16	21	21	60

58 students responded to this question from which 28% responded YES, 36% responded NO and 36% were not sure. The majority of Asian and African students would leave the country in case of any changes in the free education law.

Question 18 from the questionnaire: What are the problems you are facing as a foreign student in Arcada/Finland?

The total of 53 student responded to this question. The respondents assumed the following:

<b><u>Responses</u></b>	<b><u>Occurrence</u></b>
• Lack of integration	13
• Finnish language is required by most of the employers	3
• Use of Swedish language during lectures	2
• Lack of knowledge of the Finnish culture	4
• Lack of Finnish language skills	14
• Lack of English information in Arcada.	2
• Working and studying at the same time	7
• Finding a work placement	4
• Lack of the English language among Finnish students	6

Question 19 from the questionnaire: what can be done to ease your situation?

38 students responded to this question. The respondents assumed the following:

<b><u>Responses</u></b>	<b><u>Occurrence</u></b>
• Using English during the lectures	5
• Finding work placement for students	4
• More intensive Finnish courses	12
• More social activities for Finnish and foreign students together	8
• Introducing students to employers	4
• Make sure all information are available in English	2
• More cultural courses to introduce the Finnish culture to foreigners.	3

## 7

## RESULT AND CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 VISA PERMIT BASED ON DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS.

All the Asian, African and American exchange students at Arcada needed a visa for Finland except those who have immigrated to Finland with their families years ago. Some of the students found the whole process of applying for the student visa easy and some others found it difficult. All the students were required to provide the Finnish embassy in their country of origin with similar type of documents.

The study visa can be granted for exchange students who have approval of educational institution in Finland. Since the Finnish government does not fund the stay of ex-change students in Finland, all the exchange students are required to provide the Finnish embassy with income statement, which would show that the student is capable to support him or herself during the academic year.

The author could not find any specific differences in approval rates between different nationally groups of students at Arcada.

Responses derived from the questionnaires were similar to the information available in the Finnish Immigration Service web-side and the author could not find any specific differences between them.

### 7.2 THE REASON FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS TO CHOOSE FINLAND.

The use of English language in some of the universities and colleges had an influence over some of the respondents to start searching for more details about Finland. The answers of respondents were quite similar to each other. The majority of them chose Finland either for personal reasons such as family ties and friends or for the free education system, good education standards, good quality of life, safety, security, good reputation, beautiful nature, advanced technology, desirable study programs, the geographical location of Finland, use of English language in some universities and colleges and the ease of applying for a visa. Many of the respondents seemed to be very satisfied with the educational system and pleased with their choice. The author found the responses given by students very similar to the ones mentioned in the theory part.

### **7.3 THE INTEREST LEVEL OF FOREIGN STUDENTS TO SETTLE DOWN IN FINLAND.**

22% of respondents were motivated to settle down in Finland after their graduation due to its safe environment, good living standards, the level of technology system and pleasant studying environment. However 62% were unable to give a clear answer due to unemployment or the irrelevance of their current job to their field of studies. Some respondents mentioned the importance of Finnish knowledge at the interviews and the difficulty they are facing while applying for a job. Most of the respondents were hoping to find a job related to their field of study with a good salary in order to be able to support themselves and as matter of fact they related their future plans of settling down in Finland to this matter. 16% of respondents did not have any interest or motivation to settle down in Finland and they want to go back to their own countries or to another..

As mentioned in the theory part of this thesis, Finland offers a good life standard and that is why many students would consider staying in Finland even after their graduation.

### **7.4 ASSISTING FOREIGN STUDENTS TO ADOPT THE FINNISH CULTURE.**

The lack of knowledge in Finnish language among the majority of foreign students has led to fewer interactions between Finns and foreigners. The majority of respondents believe that Arcada should emphasize more on arranging intensive courses in Finnish language for foreigners.

Lack of language skills and Finnish culture has led some students to create their own social groups and not be able to interact enough with the society. In some students opinion Finnish culture is complicated and it would be helpful if Arcada arranges some cultural courses so that students would become more familiar with the country and its cultures.

Most of the respondents in this research thought that there should be more integration between the Finns and the foreigners at Arcada University of Applies Sciences and suggested that social activities can help in creating interaction between all nations.

Another issue mentioned by some of the respondents was the use of the Swedish language during the lectures. Respondents were hoping that teachers should encourage all the Finnish/Swedish

students to communicate in English so that everyone can understand.

Finding a work placement was another issue mentioned by some respondents. They thought that Arcada should make more contacts with companies and cooperates in order to secure training opportunities for the foreign students.

Lack of English information was another issue According to some of the respondents; all information is not available in English which makes it difficult for those who can speak neither Finnish nor Swedish. Respondents suggested that Arcada should make sure that all the information is available in English.

As it has been mentioned in the theory part of this thesis, there are many different ways of assisting foreign students to adopt the culture and to integrate with the society; however one of the first steps is to learn the language.

## **7.5 THE EFFECT OF THE FREE EDUCATION LAW ON FOREIGN STUDENTS.**

28% of respondents would continue their studies in Finland even in case of changes in the free education law, 36% would leave and 36% could not give a clear answer. As mentioned by some of the respondents, a secure income and stable job can make things much easier in case of changes in free education law.

The reason for this question was to find out the motivation level of foreign students at Arcada to continue their studies in Finland in case of any changes in the free education law.

## **7.6 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FINNISH LANGUAGE.**

The majority of the respondents thought, that Finnish is very important and it is highly required by the society especially when applying for a job. So it can be much easier on the foreigners if they can speak and write in Finnish, therefore the respondents suggest that it would be helpful to have more Finnish courses for foreign students at Arcada in order to improve their language skills and minimize language barriers with Finns.

The theory part of the thesis has emphasized the importance of Finnish language in the society

which the author found in a line with the given responses by the students.

## **7.7 DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The number of immigrants has grown considerably within the last decade in Finland due to its safe environment and living conditions. The author of this research hopes that this research will assist further developments regarding this matter. The author considers this matter very important since it will affect foreigners as well as the Finnish society & economy. There are many areas that are not covered in this research that could be considered for further developments such as how the continuous growth of foreigners will affect the Finnish society in future.

## **7.8 SUMMARY**

This research examined the motivation level of foreign students to settle down in Finland and contribute their services as new citizens to the society. Findings of this research suggest that foreign students are very motivated to be settled down in Finland.

This research has also investigated foreign student's Finnish skills. Findings suggest that foreign students need to work on their Finnish skills since it is required by most of the employers, and helps in understanding the country better.

The author has also looked into the integration level among different nationality groups at Arcada University of Applied Sciences. Findings suggested that European and American students have less problems in coping with the culture compared to the other nationalities, where the cultural gap seems to be more obvious and bigger among the Asian and the African students, resulting less interaction with the society than Europeans and Americans.

This research has also investigated the process of applying for the study visa to Finland and the approval rates based on different geographical locations. Findings suggest that there are no specific differences among different nationality groups. All of the Asian, African, Australian, and American students are required to provide the Embassy in their country of origin with the similar type of documents, except for the European citizens.

The author has also looked into the main reasons for the foreign students at Arcada University of



Applies Sciences in choosing Finland as a host country. Findings suggest that the majority of students have chosen Finland due to the free education system, good quality of life, safety, security, good reputation and the ease of applying for a visa, however some others have chosen Finland due to family ties.

This research has also examined the motivation level of foreign students to continue their studies in Finland in case of any changes in the free education law. Findings suggest that the majority of students are motivated to continue their education in Finland, however as it was mentioned by students this matter depends on having a secure income and a job.

This research has also investigated different ways of assisting foreign students at Arcada University of Applies Sciences to adopt the Finnish culture and contribute their service as new citizens to the society. Findings of this research suggest the following:

1. More intensive courses of Finnish.
2. Introducing the Finnish culture to the new comers.
3. Introducing foreign students to employers and work placements.
4. Arranging more combined activities for Finns and foreigners.
5. Using English during lectures in order to make sure that every one understands.
6. Make sure all the information is available in English.

The author has covered some aspect of foreign integration in Finland. There are still many aspects that need to be studied and examined. The author hopes that there will be a lot more researches done in regard of this matter in the future.

In 1997 the department of social psychology in the University of Helsinki conducted a study regarding the similar issue. The Study compared the experience reported by different ethnic groups and that different ethnic groups face different problems. According to the author this research has followed the same path as in the previous one in many aspects.

## **8**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **8.1 TO FOREIGN STUDENTS**

Based on the research, the author recommends the followings to the foreign students:

- Focus on finding a job related to your field of study in order to build up your profile.
- Improve your Finnish skills and take more intensive courses elsewhere if it is not offered by your college.
- Be patient and take a positive approach while learning about the new culture.

### **8.2 TO THE FINNISH UNIVERSITIES AND POLYTECHNICS**

#### **AUTHORITIES:**

- Provide language and cultural courses in the early stage of foreign students' arrival so that they would become familiar with the culture and language.
- Provide activities for Finnish and foreign students in order to increase the communication between them and to reduce the isolation.
- Assist foreign students to become more familiar with work placement and the process of applying for a job.

## Appendix 2: A copy of the questionnaire used at interview.

You are invited to participate in a research study regarding “The settlement of new citizens in the Finnish society” which is conducted by researcher Sanaz Najariyan on behalf of Arcada Polytechnic, Helsinki, Finland.

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect information based on motivation& potential of foreign students studying in Arcada Polytechnic; to be employed and settled down after their graduation in Finland.

It will be highly appreciated if you could answer to the following questions!

1. Where are you from?

2. How old are you?

☐ Under 21   ☐ 21-25   ☐ 26-30   ☐ Above 31

3. How long have you lived in Finland?

☐ 1-4   ☐ 5-9   ☐ 10-14   ☐ Above 15

4. How long have you been studying in Arcada?

☐ 0-1   ☐ 1-2   ☐ 2-3   ☐ 3-4   ☐ over 4

5. Did you need a Study Visa to Finland? **(If yes describe if it was easy for you to get it)**

☐ Yes   ☐ No

6. Why did you choose Finland?(Explain)

7. Do you speak Finnish?

Swedish?

☐ Fluent  
☐ Moderate  
☐ Little  
☐ None

☐ Fluent  
☐ Moderate  
☐ Little  
☐ None

8. How do you find the Finnish culture?

☐ Easy   ☐ Fine   ☐ Complicated

9.What were your expectations of Finland before arrival?

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10.Were your expectations met?

☐ Yes ☐ No

11.Have you ever been discriminated or become a victim of racism in Finland?

☐ Yes ☐ No

12.Do you currently have a job?(**If yes skip question 14**)

☐ Yes ☐ No

13.Is your current job related to your field of study?

☐ Yes ☐ No

14.Have you ever had a job/Practical Training in Finland?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15.How important do you think is the Finnish language while applying for a job in Finland?

☐ Very Important  
☐ Less Important  
☐ Not Important

16.Would you stay in Finland after your graduation?(Explain)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

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17.In case of any changes in the free education law; would you still continue your studies in Finland?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

18.What are the problems you are facing as a foreign student in Arcada/Finland? (Explain)

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19.What can be done to ease your situation?(Explain)

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